

# ABRAHAM LINCOLN



AN ADDRESS

By CHARLES EUGENE CLARK

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE KENTUCKY STATE LEAGUES  
OF LOCAL BUILDING AND LOAN ASSOCIATIONS

*Second Edition.*



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By CHARLES EUGENE CLARK,

President of the United States and the Kentucky State Leagues of Local Building and Loan Associations.

**A**BRAHAM LINCOLN, the centenary of whose birth we celebrate today, has won the chief place in American hearts. He has become our popular hero our typical American, the proudest product of our institutions, the noblest growth of our soil.

We honor and love him because he was a man of the people, of the common people; bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh; born among the lowliest of them, in Hardin County, Kentucky, February 12, 1809, the son of a poor, unlearned pioneer farmer and backwoods carpenter, and reared in the wildness with them in the greatest poverty and want, living their lowly life and partaking of their hunger and misery, of their hopes and fears.

As the growing oak is toughened and strengthened in fibre by the blasts of the forest, until it becomes a towering giant among its surroundings, so the boy, Abraham, learned in the early struggles of life, while his father followed his humble calling, to so shape his own course, and life, as to enable him in the years to come to build a character that made him a God-given force and power among men, to mold the thought of his adopted State and of his nation, and guide the ship of state through troubled waters, to the glory and honor of all mankind.

Abraham Lincoln, while he arose a giant in every sense of the word among men, never forgot his lowly origin; nor permitted himself to get out of touch with the humble and lowly; but always felt and sympathized with them; for with them he had experienced the misery and grayness of their every-day life, and caught the heart-beat of the masses as he lived their lowly life, because he understood them and their trials and sufferings.

Even as a little boy he knew hunger and cold, misery and unrequited toil, in a rude log cabin. His couch was a bed of leaves on the bare floor, with skins at the door's entrance to keep out the rain, the snow and the cold.

Can we then wonder why he was beloved by the masses?

The idols of the popular heart have ever been poor men; men who have suffered and have sympathies in common with them.

These experiences, which were continued through his youth and early manhood, knitted him in close sympathy with the suffering and afflictions of his fellow-men and country, and enabled him to see and view the world and its trials as they found and experienced them.

We are told that he split four hundred rails for each yard of jeans, for which the rails were bartered, in order to secure sufficient cloth for a suit of clothes. Those of you who have ever cut a tie, or split a rail, realize the price he paid for that suit of

jeans. This surely was the portion and dowry of hardest, most bitter toil.

When first elected to the Legislature in Illinois he walked one hundred miles, over the rough country roads of Clay and Corduroy, to the State Capitol at Vandalia, and then, at the close of the session, back home again. He walked because his necessities and desire to succeed in life forced him to economize.

Lincoln in his youth had little schooling, as we understand the term, but he was rich in many and varied experiences and was deeply learned in two books unknown to many profound readers—*The Book of Nature and the Book of Man*.

And yet, in this backwoods lawyer, the country woke up to the fact that it had a President of genuine culture and great intellectual power. For Lincoln, by his own heroic efforts, with the kindly help of his rude pioneer friends, arose above his unlettered surroundings and thus demonstrated that it is possible under our free institutions, for all men, no matter how lowly their condition, who possess the will and force, *to rise*, even though they be clogged and beset with dire poverty and want. *Necessity* is ever the spur to exertion, and *opportunity* the door to preferment and advancement.

This successful struggle of Lincoln's is one of the great lessons of his life and one of our greatest assets as a people, and should be taken to heart by every struggling soul.

Integrity makes for character and spells success, and so we hear Lincoln called "*Honest Abe Lincoln*." Yes, he was rightly so called, for rugged honesty, sincerity and integrity were among the chief characteristics of this most wonderful man, upon which he builded an unassailable character, ever the true foundation of *greatness*.

He never forgot them, but always lived up to them in the most minute details of his life. And we are even told that he was too honest to make a good lawyer or to make money. Yet he became, in the opinion of competent judges, perhaps the greatest lawyer in his State, and was a *feared* antagonist at the bar. His ability and rugged honesty, sincerity and openness carried conviction, and won many a judge and jury. His services were ever enlisted to redress wrongs and establish truth and justice.

He was the most homely of men, with his great lank, angular face and figure, being six feet four inches tall, with long-reaching arms, big, ungainly hands, calloused with the hard pioneer work of his early life. Yet his countenance *literally beamed* with honest, loving kindness, truth and sympathy, and his great arms encompassed the woes and trials of his country, as he took them to his breast and grieved over them; and his large, calloused hands, the result of laborious toil, were clean and undefiled from all corruption, and bore the burdens of his country and ministered to the pain and suffering of her soldiers, wrote the Emancipation Proclamation, which freed twelve million slaves, and made out pardons for tired soldiers who, suffering from excessive service, went to sleep

while on duty, or who had, in fear or timidity, fled in the face of the enemy, had been condemned to death by court-martial.

Lincoln knew the weaknesses and frailties of human nature and all its limitations, and always believed in the goodness of heart of all mankind. He, in spite of all protests and those rules of war made for the discipline of the service, refused to be a party to the making of more widows and orphans through the execution of Union soldiers for infractions of the stern laws of war.

He was a born leader, a man of brains, of heart and sympathy, who came fresh from the hand of Almighty God to serve and save his country and to ennoble mankind. He was indeed Nature's Nobleman, one who was not only a politician, but a statesman, a partisan, also a patriot; and his partisanship was rounded out by his love of country and high sense of duty, while his nobility and gentleness attuned him to all humanity, to which he willingly gave the last measure of unselfish service.

He was an assiduous student, so far as time and opportunity permitted him to be, and he devoted every spare moment to the reading of such books on grammar, politics, surveying and law as was possible for him to find or borrow; and he mastered them, making them his very own.

His schoolmasters were said to be three—"an invincible will, a boundless patience and an eager thirst for knowledge." From the schooling of these masters he emerged a truly educated man, for he conquered not only his books, but also himself, and became wise in his day and generation.

Like Bunyan, he spoke and wrote the language of the people, such as they could fully comprehend and understand. His statements were clear, masterful and profound. He never learned the art of saying one thing and meaning another. Candor and frankness to him were cardinal virtues. As statesman and President, he became imbued with all the learning necessary to enable him to successfully handle the mighty problems affecting his country. His state papers and speeches are literary masterpieces, and have continued to excite the wonder and admiration of mankind. Their grandeur lies in their directness and force, sincerity, simplicity, humanity and beauty.

His inaugurals and his speech at Gettysburg will live in the minds and hearts of his countrymen as long as our land and language shall endure; for they are the personification of patriotism and statesmanship, and have sounded the very depths of human feeling.

Almighty God, in His boundless wisdom, raised up this leader of men, out of the western wilderness, as a modern Moses, to lead our nation through the turmoil and travail of war, out of the sloughs of despondency and degradation, through a baptism of calumny, doubt, heartaches, fire and blood, to greater moral heights and true national greatness, freed of the shackles of slavery and the bitter dissensions and acrimonious disputes of its sons, to perfect peace, brotherly love and accord.



Lincoln was one of the gentlest souls ever born into this world. He was a kindly man, the loving, compassionate father of his people; one who took unto himself their many and grievous burdens. He rejoiced in their prosperity and happiness and keenly felt and sympathized with them in their woes. He was ever an inspiration to them in their hours of supreme trial and affliction, and pointed the way to the light when darkness had gathered over them and hope had fled. The beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount were ever reflected in his daily life and conduct.

He was an humble man. He never ascribed unto himself any feats of greatness, nor paraded his virtues, but, ever mindful of the omnipotence and mercies of our Heavenly Father, always attributed all the strength and glory of the accomplishment of his life and administration to the people and to God. He was pure in heart, upright in conduct, the soul of honesty and manliness, and, knowing the weaknesses of our poor human nature and its dependence, always invoked the assistance of Divine Providence upon all of his and the nation's undertakings. He walked with God, as he prayed for Divine guidance, strength and succor, and was blest with victory.

In the eyes of the world that knew him best he was ever accounted a man of unblemished life, a kind neighbor and a dependable friend, one who had learned to trust in Providence, to honor the Bible and respect the Sabbath; to pray, to worship his Creator, love Christ and consider nothing human alien to him. His great, kindly heart ever encompassed humanity.

He was said to be an absolutely brave man; one without physical or moral fear, ever ready to champion and succor the weak, the needy and the downtrodden, to forgive the erring and raise the fallen. He was a tactful man and had a great leader's indispensable gift in dealing with men and in molding events and in analyzing motives.

By his gentleness, tenderness and tactfulness he was able to control the policy and bent of his Cabinet, the administrative servants of the Nation; to lead the Generals in the field and subdue the complaints of the soldiers at the front and the civilians at home, and to avoid those entangling foreign complications that might have led to misunderstandings.

By his firmness and aggressiveness he thwarted foreign opposition to the cause of the Union, compelled the nations of the earth to respect its wishes and edicts, and brought to a successful close four years of most horrible civil war, with the Union unimpaired, and was idolized by his countrymen.

And though he died a martyr for humanity, yet his most lamentable death was not in vain, for by his life, sacrifices and death he proved in the supreme hour that he had merited the martyr's crown of greatest service, in the cause of his country and that of humanity.

He proved that though this Republic might be torn and ravished by great political evil, and fratricidal strife, even that of civil war,



it could yet endure the greatest climax of horrors without disintegration, and that the faith of the fathers was well founded, that the priceless heritage of a free people and a free land had been worthily bestowed upon worthy sons and daughters, which they treasured as a priceless guerdon, and that this nation *of* the people, *for* the people, and *by* the people, should not perish from the earth, and that the greatness of a state only emphasizes the happiness and contentment of its citizens who are its sovereigns.

He demonstrated that its flag and its sentiments shall ever fly on the wings of the morning, carrying, for all time, and to all peoples throughout the world, the blessings of *Liberty* and the *Equality* of all men, before the Law; that true government rests only on the full consent of the governed; that involuntary slavery and servitude, except as a punishment for crime committed, can not and should not exist among an enlightened people, one that acknowledges the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God.

In the language of the attic philosopher, Abraham Lincoln, poverty-stricken boy, enured to hardship and service, statesman, President and martyr, was but another member of that noble phalanx that has always marched in front for the example and salvation of the world.

For this brave soldier's war cry was Home, Happiness, Freedom, Equality, Country, Humanity—*God*. His standard was that of Duty. For him was the Divine law of Self-sacrifice. He had learned that to love something more than one's self was the secret of all that is Great, and to live for others is the aim of all Noble Souls, and that the supreme expression of life and religion, upon this earth, is that of *greatest service*.

His life was sincere and honest and without material blemish. He wrought for the good of his country and of mankind, as he bore his high commission, seeking Divine guidance in its exercise from the King of Kings.

His birth and life have hallowed the log cabin and enshrined it in the hearts of humanity, as it became the cradle of greatness, surpassing the splendor of the palace.

His humble life, with its early hardships, has won the admiration of mankind. For through it he rose to the pinnacles of Fame, Power and Earthly Grandeur. And the integrity of his life and conduct and its successes have become an inspiration to struggling humanity.

The people have learned to love and cherish him, to revere his memory and keep time to the music of his heart, as his life and mission have ever become better known to them with the passing years.

He was great in life, great in death, and is great in history. He was unique in character and majestic in his individuality; fashioned of God in a heroic mold, for a heroic purpose, a savior of his country and a blessing to humanity, as he wrought *heroically* in a supreme hour for his country's good and honor. He was solid and brilliant and is easily the First American.

As he climbed every rung of the ladder of Life, from direst poverty to the Presidential chair, he illustrated to the fullest and widest extent the possibility of *American citizenship* and the blessings of free institutions, where all men are equal before the law.

It has been truly said "that his biography was written in blood and tears," for not only had he known the misery of every-day life, the common heritage of mankind, had felt its greatest sorrows, which attuned him in experience and suffering, with that monotone of sadness which has ever enveloped, crushed, raised and enriched humanity, but had also mounted the highest ramparts of human accomplishment and feeling and tasted earth's greatest joys, so that uncounted millions rise and call him blessed, and a redeemed and reunited Republic and people is his monument.

His was indeed a simple, yet sublime, life, worthy of our undying emulation. In his service and sacrifices for his country, and in his forgiving disposition, he is suggestive of the mercy of the Savior of mankind. And, though human, in a sense divine, for he had touched the chords of life, which make the whole world kin.

His name and fame are prouder and higher and will outlast that of the Hapsburgs, and are more enduring than statutes of bronze and marble, for they are enshrined in the hearts and memory of all mankind. For his supreme service was for God, Country and Humanity.

May we be ever mindful that our Heavenly Father in His boundless wisdom in the fulfillment of His purposes, working His will through His chosen of the nation, the anointed, patient and immortal Lincoln, kept kindled the fires of loyalty and patriotism as they oft flickered and burned low on the altars of our country and freedom for the salvation of the Union during the prolonged and frightful struggles of the war for human rights, as it dragged its bloody course through the years, with its harrowing and varying fortunes.

For as Jehovah commanded the High Priest to preserve for the governance of His people and keep within the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, His commandments, so He entrusted the lightning of his wrath and the integrity of our nation to Abraham Lincoln, as he was called to serve mankind and save the State.

As His High Priest, this chosen leader not only wielded with awful power the Sword of Destiny, but also officiated at the first community of our people as the stricken nation gathered at the Throne of grace to seek balm for its wounds, to heal its woes, forget its differences, to ask for and extend forgiveness for all of its shortcomings, render thanks for all mercies and seek of the Most High, for all time to come, the Divine Guidance of Heaven.

As God in His mercy raised up this heroic figure from among the children of men to lead our nation to the light and freedom in that greatest crisis of our existence as a people, may He in the exercise of a boundless patience and goodness, should annihilation again confront us, send to us, as He may find us worthy of worldly salvation, another Abraham Lincoln.



